

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1690
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AMEMBASSY TIAPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC HONO HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 PEKING 2520

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CH PINT

SUBJ: PRC LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS: ONE YEAR AFTER TENG'S REHABILITATION

1. SUMMARY. ONE YEAR AFTER THE REHABILITATION OF TENG HSIAO-PING, THE PRC LEADERSHIP APPEARS TO HAVE REACHED A BASIC CONSENSUS ON AMBITIONS MODERNIZATION GOALS. THE NUMBER OF IMPORTANT, PRAGMATIC, AND IN SOME CASES UNPRECEDENTED, DECISIONS REACHED IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS IS IMPRESSIVE. TENG HSIAO-PING HAS BEEN THE MOVING FORCE BEHIND MOST OF THESE POLICY INNOVATIONS AND HE IS PUSHING HARD FOR FURTHER CHANGES. HOWEVER, IN A NUMBER OF AREAS, TENG MAY HAVE TAKEN UNILATERAL ACTION -- A STYLE OF LEADERSHIP THAT HAS GOTTEN HIM IN TROUBLE BEFORE. TENG APPEARS TO HAVE MET RESISTANCE IN HIS ATTEMPTS TO REMOVE PROVINCIAL RIVALS AND A NUMBER OF

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HIS POLICY INNOVATIONS ARE CONTROVERSIAL.

2. BASIC TENSIONS WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP OVER POLICY AND PERSONALITIES PERSIST DESPITE PROFESSIONS OF UNANIMITY. TENG, OR AT LEAST HIS SUPPORTERS ARE CONTINUING TO NAMEUVER AGAINST SEVERAL POLITBURO MEMBERS ONCE ASSOCIATED WITH THE GANG OF FOUR AND

EFFORTS TO PREVENT TENG'S REHABILITATION LAST YEAR. IN THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, PEKING PARTY BOSS WU TEH AND SHENYANG MILITARY REGION COMMANDER LI TEH-SHENG HAVE SEEN THEIR POSITIONS INCREASINGLY ERODED. HUA KUO-FENG IS NOT DOMINATING THE POLITICAL SCENE AS HE ONCE DID AND HE APPEARS TO BE SOMEWHAT ECLIPSED BY THE MOMENTUM OF TENG'S POLICY INNOVATIONS. HOWEVER, ANY SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN REAL POWER AMONG THE TOP LEADERS WILL PROBABLY BE DOWNPLAYED. INTERDEPENDENCE, A SENSE OF HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE INABILITY OF ANY SINGLE LEADER TO ACHIEVE COMPLETE DOMINATION WILL PROBABLY HOLD THE LEADERSHIP TOGETHER, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. END SUMMARY.

3. ONE YEAR AFTER THE REHABILITATION OF TENG HSIAO-PING, THE PRC LEADERSHIP APPEARS TO HAVE REACHED A BASIC CONSENSUS ON AMBITIOUS MODERNIZATION GOALS. DESPITE PERSONAL RIVALRIES AT THE TOP, MUCH HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN THE PAST YEAR. PRC LEADERS HAVE MAINTAINED A HECTIC PACE OF NATIONAL ECONOMIC MEETINGS, PRESSED FOR TIGHTER POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY, AND PURSUED A MORE ACTIVE FOREIGN POLICY. WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THE TORTOISE-LIKE MOVEMENT OF THE CHINESE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS, THE NUMBER OF IMPORTANT, PRAGMATIC, AND IN SOME CASES UNPRECEDENTED

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CEMENTED, DECISIONS REACHED IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS IS IMPRESSIVE. WE HAVE SEEN:

- DETERMINED EFFORTS TO OVERHAUL THE EDUCATION SYSTEM WITH PRIMARY EMPHASIS RETURNED TO EXCELLENCE IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT;
- THE DIRECTIVE TO SEND THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS TO THE WEST FOR ACADEMIC TRAINING;
- THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MATERIAL INCENTIVES TO INCREASE PRODUCTION;
- THE SHIFT TO A MODERNIZED, PROFESSIONAL ARMY, AND DISCUSSION OF THE REINSTATEMENT OF RANKS;
- A WILLINGNESS TO EXPLORE GREATER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PRC AND FOREIGN COMPANIES FOR THE EXPLOITATION OF CHINA'S NATURAL RESOURCES;
- APPROVAL OF EXPANDED USE OF INTERNATIONAL CREDIT TO FACILITATE IMPORTS OF WESTERN TECHNOLOGY;
- MOVES TOWARD INCREASED GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES, DRAMATIZED BY THE FRANK PRESS VISIT AND THE UPCOMING BERGLAND AND SCHLESINGER VISITS AND REPRESENTING THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN THE PRC APPROACH TO CONDUCTING RELATIONS WITH THE US SINCE THE DECISION TO ESTAB-

LISH LIAISON OFFICES IN 1973.

ALL OF THESE MOVES WOULD HAVE SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE TWO YEARS AGO. NOW CHINESE LEADERS ARE DISPLAYING REMARKABLE WILLINGNESS TO EXPLORE NEW POLICY OPTIONS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR DIEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS. THE PRESENT EMPHASIS ON "SEEKING TRUTH FROM FACTS" AMOUNTS IN PRACTICE TO A VARIANT OF THE ONCE CONDEMNED STATEMENT BY TENG THAT "IT DOESN'T MATTER IF THE CAT IS BLACK OR WHITE, AS LONG AS IT CATCHES MICE."

4. TEN HSIAO-PING SEEMS CLEARLY TO HAVE BEEN THE MOVING FORCE BEHIND MOST OF THESE POLICY INNOVATIONS, AND HE IS PUSHING HARD FOR FURTHER CHANGES. HIS
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RECENT STATEMENTS AND POLICY DECISIONS SUGGEST THAT HE IS INCREASINGLY ACTING AS IF HE WERE PARTY CHAIRMAN. HIS MOVES ARE BOLD AND FAR REACHING. HE HAS NOT BEEN AFRAID TO ADDRESS SUCH SENSITIVE POLITICAL QUESTIONS AS RECONSIDERATION OF LIU SHAO-CHI'S STATUS, THE REVIVAL OF CRITICISM OF LIN PIAO AND THE EXTENSION OF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE GANG OF FOUR TO INCLUDE RECTIFICATION OF THE MILITARY AS

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

WELL AS CIVILIANS UNITS IN THE PROVINCES. PEOPLE'S DAILY AND OTHER NEWSPAPERS HAVE HAILED TENG'S "DIRECTIVES" ON EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS AND SEVERAL ARTICLES SUGGESTED THAT HE WAS THE "RESPONSIBLE CADRE OF THE CENTER" WHO ISSUED DIRECTIVES ON THE UNSETTLED POLITICAL SITUATION IN SHENSI. IN A NUMBER OF THESE AREAS, TENG MAY HAVE TAKEN UNILATERAL ACTION -- A STYLE OF LEADERSHIP THAT HAS GOTTEN HIM INTO TROUBLE BEFORE. HE HAS AGAIN COME DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO OVERSTEPPING HIMSELF AND STIMULATING OPPOSITION TO HIS POLICIES. HE ALREADY SEEMS TO HAVE MET RESISTANCE IN ATTEMPTING TO REMOVE PROVINCIAL LEADERS ONCE ASSOCIATED WITH LIN PIAO AND THE GANG OF FOUR.

5. BASIC TENSIONS WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP PERSIST DESPITE PROFESSIONS OF UNANIMITY. IN MAY AND JUNE, CONFIDENTIAL

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OBVIOUS DIFFERENCES WERE SEEN IN MAJOR SPEECHES GIVEN BY HUA KUO-FENG (MORE MAOIST) AND TENG HSIAO-PIING (MORE PRAGMATIC) ON SUCH ISSUES AS THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY BOTH MEN LAST MONTH SUGGEST THAT THE GAP MAY HAVE NARROWED, HOWEVER. HUA'S SPEECH TO THE JULY FINANCE AND TRADE CONFERENCE PUT HIM CLOSER TO TENG ON A NUMBER OF ECONOMIC ISSUES. TENG, IN HIS TOAST AT THE JULY 31 GATHERING TO MARK THE 51ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE PLA, ASSOCIATED HIMSELF WITH THE GOAL OF "UNITY UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF CHAIRMAN HUA," A REFERENCE HE SELDOM MAKES. RECENT EMDIA EMPHASIS ON DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM-- A THEME ASSOCIATED WITH EFFORTS TO TIGHTEN DISCIPLINE WITHIN THE PARTY -- NEVERTHELESS SUGGESTS DISAGREEMENT AT THE TOP AND WITHIN THE BUREAUCRACY ABOUT PERSONALITIES AND POLICY INNOVATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, HUA, YEH'S AND TENG'S SPEECHES AT THE MAY/JUNE ALL ARMY POLITICAL WORK CONFERENCE AND RECENT SPEECHES AND ARTICLES BY POLITBURO MEMBERS HSU HSIANG-CHIEN, NIEH JUNG-CHEN AND PLA DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF YANG YUNG STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE DEBATE ABOUT POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE PLA, THE CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF THE "PEOPLE'S WAR" CONCEPT IN A MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL AGE, AND THE STRATEGIC

IMPORTANCE OF THE MILITIA. IN ADDITION, ARTICLES ATTACKING CAUTIOUS BUREAUCRATS INDICATE THAT THE LEADERSHIP IS HAVING TROUBLE SUSTAINING ITS DRIVE TO ACHIEVE AMBITIOUS ECONOMIC GOALS WHILE KEEPING POLITICAL CONTROL OVER AN UNWIELDY ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS.

6. DEEP TENSIONS THAT EXIST AMONG SIGNIFICANT
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SEGMENTS OF CHINESE SOCIETY MAY BE SHARPENED BY REFORMS NOW UNDERWAY. STUDENTS ADMITTED TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES DURING THE GANG OF FOUR ERA ARE BEING PUSHED ASIDE BY RECENT ARRIVALS WHO ARE MORE QUALIFIED ACADEMICALLY. FORMER RED GUARDS AND YOUNG BUREAUCRATS WHO ROSE TO POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION ARE FINDING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES BLOCKED BY THE REHABILITATION OF THE OLDEER GENERATION. THE SENDING OF LARGE NUMBERS OF STUDENTS ABROAD WILL CAUSE PROBLEMS IN SELECTION AND RESULT IN JEALOUSIES AND FRICTIONS THAT WILL SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN CHINA FOR YEARS TO COME. THE RETURN OF THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO A FREER LIFESTYLE AND DIFFERENT POLITICAL SYSTEMS COULD RIVAL THE IMPACT OF THE MAY FOURTH MOVEMENT. MANY OFFICIALS AND POSSIBLY SEVERAL TOP LEADERS IN ANTICIPATION OF THESE PROBLEMS MAY PUSH FOR A RECONSIDERATION OR A SCALING DOWN OF TENG'S PROPOSAL TO SEND LARGE NUMBERS OF STUDENTS ABROAD.

7. IN ADDITION, TENG, OR AT LEAST HIS SUPPORTERS, ARE CONTINUING TO MANEUVER AGAINST SEVERAL POLITIBURO MEMBERS ONCE ASSOCIATED WITH THE "GANG OF FOUR" AND EFFORTS TO PREVENT TENG'S REHABILITATION LAST YEAR. IN THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, BOTH PEKING PARTY BOSS WU TEH AND SHENYANG MILITARY REGION COMMANDER LI TEH-SHENG HAVE SEEN THEIR POSITIONS INCREASINGLY ERODED. THROUGH HUA'S APPARENT DEFENSE OF THE COMPROMISE THAT BROUGHT TENG BACK, WU TEH, LI TEH-SHENG AND EVEN CHEN HSI-LIEN HAVE BECOME ASSOCIATED WITH HUA KUO-FENG IN THE MINDS OF MANY RESIDENTS IN PEKING, ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES. INSTEAD OF MOUNTING A DIRECT ATTACK ON WU OR LI, TENG IS ATTEMPTING TO UNDERCUT THEIR POSITIONS BY ATTACKING AND REMOVING THEIR POLITICAL ALLIES IN KEY PROVINCIAL
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POSITIONS. MORE RECENTLY, MEDIA AND POSTER ATTACKS ON WU TEH HAVE INTENSIFIED, SUGGESTING THAT THE POLITBURO HAS AGAIN BEEN FORCED TO CONSIDER THE STATUS OF PEKING'S MAYOR. WU HAS PROBABLY ALREADY LOST HIS REAL POWER WHILE SUPERFICIALLY RETAINING HIS POSITION. THE HANDLING OF SAIFUDIN'S CASE MAY BE THE PATTERN FOR FUTURE OUSTERS.

8. HUA KUO-FENG IS NOT DOMINATING THE POLITICAL SCENE AS HE ONCE DID AND HE APPEARS TO BE SOMEWHAT ECLIPSED BY THE MOMENTUM OF TENG'S POLICY INNOVATIONS. EXTRAVAGANT PRAISE OF HIS "BRILLIANT AND MODEST STYLE OF LEADERSHIP" HAVE DECREASED IN THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS EVEN THOUGH RITUALIZED REFERENCES TO HIS DECISIONS CONTINUE. HE IS FAR FROM BEING ISOLATED AND FOREIGN VISITORS DESCRIBE HIM AS "CONFIDENT AND IN CHARGE," AND HUA WILL DOMINATE THE PRC MEDIA FOR SEVERAL WEEKS AS HE TRAVELS TO EASTERN

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EUROPE AND IRAN.

9. WE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SEE TENG PUSH AHEAD IN A NUMBER OF POLICY AREAS AND ATTEMPT TO WEAKEN THE POSITIONS OF HIS ANTAGONISTS IN THE POLITBURO. HE MAY FACE STIFFER RESISTANCE IF HE CONTINUES TO IMPLEMENT CONTROVERSIAL POLICIES AND ATTEMPTS TO ALTER THE PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL POWER EQUATION. ANY SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN REAL POWER HOLDINGS AT THE TOP WILL PROBABLY DOWNPLAYED AND ACCOMPLISHED WITH AS LITTLE FANFARE AS POSSIBLE. A PUBLIC SPLIT IN THE LEADERSHIP NOW SO SOON AFTER THE POLITICAL TRAUMA OF 1976 WOULD SHAKE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND DASH ANY HOPES THAT THE PRC WILL ACCOMPLISH AMBITIOUS ECONOMIC GOALS. HUA CANNOT AFFORD A PURGE OF INDIVIDUALS ON WHOM HE HAS RELIED SINCE MAO'S DEATH AND TENG MAY THINK THAT LEADERSHIP

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DIVERSION WOULD DIVERT NATIONAL ATTENTION AWAY FROM MODERNIZATION EFFORTS. INTERDEPENDENCE, A SENSE OF HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE INABILITY OF ANY SINGLE LEADER TO ACHIEVE COMPLETE DOMINATION PROBABLY HOLD THE LEADERSHIP TOGETHER, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING.

10. HOWEVER, LOOKING BACK ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PAST 28 YEARS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO BE AS CONFIDENT THAT THE PACE AND DIRECTION OF PRESENT POLICIES WILL CONTINUE UNCHANGED. THE PRC HAS HAD PAST SWINGS TOWARD PRAGMATISM AND CLOSER TIES TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THESE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED BY ABRUPT SWINGS BACK TO "IDEOLOGICAL PURITY", KNOW-NOTHINGISM AND XENOPHOBIA -- THE "BOXER" TENDENCIES THAT RUN DEEP IN CHINESE SOCIETY. THE SUDDEN REVERSAL OF PREVIOUS DOGMA OVER THE PAST 20 MONTHS COULD POSSIBLY STIMULATE A MAOIST RESURGENCE EVEN THOUGH MAO, THE MAJOR CATALYST OF THESE REBOUNDS TO THE LEFT, IS NO LONGER PRESENT. THERE IS NO SIGN, THOUGH, THAT HUA OR ANYBODY ELSE COULD -- OR WOULD WANT TO -- CHAMPION A LEFTIST REVIVAL BY HARNESSING THE DISSATISFIED ELEMENTS IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND TRYING TO REVERSE PRESENT TRENDS COMPLETELY. THE CURRENT REFORMS ARE FAR-REACHING AND PROMISE TO DEVELOP MOMENTUM AMONG THE MASSES WHICH ANY ONE POLITICAL FIGURE WILL FIND VERY DIFFICULT TO OVERCOME. WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY OCCASIONAL LEFTWARD ADJUSTMENTS -- REDUCTION IN THE NUMBERS OF STUDENTS TO GO ABROAD, RIGIDITIES IN CULTURAL POLICY, SUDDEN RETURNS TO POST PHRASING ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES -- DUE TO SHIFTS IN POLITBURO POWER RELATIONSHIPS.

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11. LOOKING AHEAD TO THE NEXT SIX MONTHS, THERE ARE SEVERAL AREAS THAT SHOULD BE WATCHED CLOSELY TO SEE IF PRESENT TRENDS WILL CONTINUE. THE POST-MAO SUCCESSION COMPROMISE MUST REMAIN VIABLE. SUDDEN DEATH OF A KEY POLITICAL FIGURE SUCH AS HUA, YEH OR TENG, OR THE REMOVAL OF WU TEH OR LI TEH-SHENG FROM THE POLITBURO COULD UPSET THE PRESENT EQUILIBRIUM AND PARALYZE DECISION-MAKING. MANAGERIAL REFORM, THE APPLICATION OF MATERIAL INCENTIVES AND HEAVY INVESTMENT SHOULD SHOW REAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTIFY THE IDEOLOGICAL ABOUT-FACE THAT CHINA HAS TAKEN. THE DRAMATIC OPENING TO THE WEST SHOULD CONTINUE TO EVOLVE. THE PRC LEADERSHIP, AND TENG IN PARTICULAR, HAS KEYED CHINA'S MODERNIZATION EFFORTS TO CLOSER LINKS AND COOPERATION WITH JAPAN, WESTERN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES. EVEN THOUGH THE OPENING TO THE WEST AND TO THE UNITED STATES IN PARTICULAR HAS BEEN LINKED TO CHINA'S STRATEGIC INTERESTS, MUCH WILL DEPEND ON TENG'S ABILITY TO CONVINCE HIS COLLEAGUES AND THE CHINESE NATION THAT ITS OPENING SHOULD BE TURNED INTO A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT.

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